

201536Z Nov 00

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PAGE 01 HARARE 06459 201536Z
ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-02	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/010W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7654
INFO NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 006459

SIPDIS

NAIROBI PLEASE PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY RICE

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR GAYLE SMITH

LONDON FOR GURNEY

PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS

PASS USTR FOR ROSA WHITAKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2010
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HARARE 06459 201536Z

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI SAYS NO EARLY DECISION LIKELY ON MASS ACTION

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR TOM MCDONALD FOR REASON 1.5 (D).

¶1. (C) DURING THE COURSE OF A CONVERSATION ON ANOTHER MATTER NOVEMBER 20, MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE PRESIDENT MORGAN TSVANGIRAI TOLD AMBASSADOR MCDONALD THAT HIS PARTY HAD MADE NO DECISION REGARDING PLANS FOR MASS ACTION IN DECEMBER. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET ON NOVEMBER 24 AND THAT [THE DECISION TO ENGAGE IN MASS ACTION] "WON'T BE CONCRETIZED THEN." THE AMBASSADOR URGED AGAINST THIS COURSE OF ACTION BECAUSE IT WOULD RESULT IN A LIKELY LOSS OF LIFE, AND CAUSE PRESIDENT MUGABE TO LASH OUT, ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PARTY HAD TO BE TRUE TO ITS SUPPORTERS. TSVANGIRAI REPLIED THAT HE WAS "CONSCIOUS OF THE SENSITIVITIES" OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND PROMISED TO WORK TO CHANNEL HIS SUPPORTERS' ANGER PRODUCTIVELY. HE BLAMED THE PRESS BECAUSE IT "WHIPS UP ANGER," ADDING THAT HE WOULD "TAKE OUR PEOPLE INTO OUR CONFIDENCE" SO THAT THEY MIGHT "ARRIVE AT THE RIGHT CONCLUSION."

¶2. (C) TSVANGIRAI THEN COMMENTED ON THE WEEKEND FRACAS BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF THE RULING ZANU-PF AND THE MDC IN RURAL BEATRICE, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE MARONDERA WEST BY-ELECTION. HE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS A RALLY THERE, BUT UPON RECEIVING CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 06459 201536Z
INFORMATION OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND DECIDED NOT TO DO SO. MDC SUPPORTERS WHO WENT TO BEATRICE TRIED TO HOLD A RALLY, BUT FOUND WAR VETERANS AT THEIR CHOSEN LOCATION. THE MDC SUPPORTERS TOLD THE VETERANS TO MOVE, AS THEY HAD BOOKED THE SPOT, AT WHICH POINT SHOOTING ENSUED. NO ONE WAS HIT, BUT AT LEAST ONE ZANU-PF SUPPORTER WAS RUN OVER IN THE CONFUSION, AS THEY TRIED TO BLOCK IN THE MDC SUPPORTERS. TSVANGIRAI ADMITTED THAT SOME MDC MEMBERS WERE BOOKED BY THE POLICE AND WERE ANSWERING CHARGES. HE CONTINUED THAT, "THE WAR VETERANS AND MUGABE WON'T ABANDON VIOLENCE," AND REPORTED THAT THERE WERE TWO BY-ELECTIONS COMING UP, ONE IN MARONDERA WEST AND THE OTHER IN BIKITA, NEAR MASVINGO. "I WILL NOT BE CAMPAIGNING THERE [IN MARONDERA WEST]," THE MDC PRESIDENT STATED. HE EXPLAINED THAT HIS SUPPORTERS TOLD HIM THEY WOULD VOTE FOR THE MDC AND IF HE CAME THEY WOULD ATTEND THE RALLY, BUT HIS PRESENCE IN THE DISTRICT WOULD ONLY INFLAME THE WAR VETERANS, WHO WOULD COME AFTER THEM IN THE NIGHT.

13. (C) COMMENT: WE WELCOME THE NEWS ON THE AS YET NOT DECIDED-FOR MASS ACTION PLAN. MASS ACTION IS A BLUNT TOOL TO BE USED WITH EXTREME CARE AND WITH GOOD PLANNING, NEITHER OF WHICH ELEMENT THE MDC IS EXERCISING IN ABUNDANCE OUTSIDE OF PARLIAMENT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC SENTIMENT IS YET AT THE POINT WHERE IT WOULD BRING ABOUT THE DESIRED RESULT, FROM EITHER A NUMERIC OR PASSION STANDARD. IN ADDITION, THOUGH HE AND THE PARTY HAVE MUCH ON THEIR PLATE, TSVANGIRAI AND THE MDC'S TOP LEADERSHIP APPEAR, AT TIMES TO US, TO BE MORE DISTRACTED AND UNFOCUSSED THAN WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE. NEVERTHELESS,

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 06459 201536Z
THE AMBASSADOR'S WORDS AND THOSE OF AF ASSISTANT SECRETARY RICE AND AF/S DIRECTOR URGING CAUTION,

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GIVEN THAT THEY ARE PLAYING WITH FIRE (AND LIVES), SEEM TO HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT. END COMMENT.

MCDONALD

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